February 9, 2017

Dear Friends,

I am writing today to express to you my heartfelt gratitude for your kindness and concern for victims/survivors of sexual abuse here in the Diocese of Arlington and throughout the world. Each of you who have come forward to report sexual abuse by clergy, by relatives or in other settings, has taken a big step to help us protect the children and adults of our families, churches and neighborhoods. You have shared some terrible truths. You have focused our attention on the pain and horror of abuse and encouraged us to speak out to protect other children from what you have endured. As a diocesan church, we have tried to listen and to do what we can to protect you and others in our community, especially our vulnerable children. As a group, our victims/survivors have educated us to the horrors of sexual abuse. You have inspired us to walk a long and difficult journey with you. We pray that you have felt our concern for you and for others around the world. Since I began this journey with you in 2004, I have learned many difficult lessons. You have been both teacher and inspiration to me.

Together we have prayed for one another and for all those suffering from the pain of sexual abuse in our Church and in our world. The 46 Masses, 36 Prayer Services, 34 Support Groups and 8 Spiritual Retreats offered by Bishop Loverde, Father Mealey and Father Ferguson over the past thirteen years have brought us all closer to God and His Blessed Mother. It has been inspiring to watch the growth of your friendships with one another and to know of your caring and concern for members of our group. Since many of you have inquired, I want to assure you of Bishop Michael Burbidge’s intention to continue a ministry to victims/survivors of abuse in the Diocese of Arlington.

Our times together at Support Groups and Retreats have been both sad and inspirational. It has been hard to hear the stories of the pain caused by sexual abuse. I have been inspired by your strength in dealing with all that has happened – but sad that you have had to go through such difficult times. In some cases, it has ravaged your families and made it hard to be together. I have been impressed with the support that you, as survivors of abuse, have been able to share with one another. You have opened your arms and welcomed newcomers to the group. You have supported them as they met new friends and tried to become part of our group. Some of you seem to have managed to take these steps on your own. For others, it has been a more difficult journey. It has brought much sadness to your life. And yet, many of you have helped us to reach out to other victims and walk with them to a safer and more holy place. I know that you pray for one another because some of you have told me of your efforts to support other group members by prayer and friendship. I am sure that God looks lovingly on your efforts.

I thank you for all that you have done to assist with our ministry to survivors of sexual abuse. You have been an inspiration to me personally. I will always hold you in my thoughts and prayers. Truly, this has been a journey that I will always hold dear. However, I have decided that the time has come for me to step down from the work of Victim Assistance. As of February 28, 2017, I will be leaving the job as Director for the Office of Victim Assistance, Diocese of Arlington. This will be a sad day for me as I have treasured my journey with you these past thirteen years. Please know that you will be in my thoughts and prayers always.

Father Ferguson has invited me to attend the Support Group on March 28, 2017 at 5:45 at St. Ann’s Catholic Church to say farewell to each of you. I plan to attend this meeting and look forward to seeing you there. May God bless you and continue to share His love and support with you and your loved ones.

Sincerely,

Helen Patricia Mudd, M.S.W, A.C.S.W.

Victim Assistance Coordinator